for implementing various promotional activities, which include, skill upgradation, design & technology upgradation, exhibitions, craft bazars, printing of catalogue, folders and setting up of common facility center. This has resulted in benefiting 760 handicraft artisans.

For preserving and promoting the textile handloom sector in the country include in the State of Assam, the schemes include Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme, Marketing & Export Promotion Scheme, Mill Gate Price Scheme, Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme and Diversified Handloom Development Scheme for the welfare of handloom weavers. These schemes/programmes facilitate in enhancing the production, productivity and efficiency of the handloom sector and enhance the income and socio-economic status of the weavers by upgrading their skills and providing infrastructural input and marketing support. During the year 2007, a sum of Rs. 9.28 crore has been released so far to Government of Assam under various schemes.

(c) Does not arise.

**Package for textile/handicraft exporting community**

766. SHRI B.J. PANDA:
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to provide an appropriate package for the textile/handicraft exporting community to check appreciating rupee with a view to compensate them;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also proposed to provide special fiscal benefits to the above sector at par wtih agriculture sector; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) The Government is seized of the submissions of textiles export promotion councils and other associations, which attribute the decline in India's textile exports to the recent appreciation in the value of the Indian rupee vis-a-vis the US dollar. The Government has introduced certain measures to provide relief to the affected textiles and handicrafts exporters, which include an increase in Duty Entitlement Pass Book and Duty Drawback rates, exemption from service tax on select services, reduction in interest rates of pre-shipment and post-shipment credit and faster clearance of arrears of terminal excise duties and Central Sales Tax.

(c) and (d) There is no such proposal under consideration of the Government.

**Seal of excellence by UNESCO to traditional handicraft products**

767. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that UNESCO has awarded the Seal of Excellence to traditional handicraft products including 12 from India;